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# TREATISE

ON

*BROWN'S*

## SYSTEM OF MEDICINE.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN OF

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## PREFACE

BY THE TRANSLATOR.

ON the continent it is a general remark, that the young physicians, fond of novelty, adhere too much to Brown's system ; and that the old ones, perhaps from an attachment to a certain routine in their practice, attend too little to it. For which reason, and as Dr. Pfaff is one of the medical writers that steer a proper middle course between the rocks, on which many of his contemporaries daily split, the translator has been induced to transfuse his sentiments on this head into our language.

He is confident that the learned will not be indifferent to a subject so important to humanity. For, as health is, in a great measure, the foundation of happiness, what can be more important, or tend more to promote the happiness of mankind, than establishing the art of restoring health upon solid principles ? But, as this establishment can hardly be ever expected to result from the efforts of one, a collision of the opinions and observations of many (so to say) is indispensibly necessary,

sary, to elicit truth, or to light the torch of true science. In this point of view, then, our author's excellent criticisms and strictures on Brown's theory and practice of physic, contained in this treatise, are, in the translator's humble apprehension, of great consequence, and highly conducive to both future discoveries and future improvements. True criticism blows our intellectual fire.



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## TREATISE

ON

BROWN'S SYSTEM OF MEDICINE.

**B**BROWN's System of Physic seems not only to gain more and more adherents, but, at the same time, to diffuse its influence more and more on the practice of medicine. In Edinburgh, the place of its nativity, it was raised, in spite of the repugnant authority of great names, by the enthusiasm of young men desirous of innovation; and even in England it found, by degrees, several votaries. It then entered upon a greater stage: It ventured to pass the frontiers of its own country, and soon struck deeper roots in foreign, than in its native soil. Italy is the country in which it met with so favourable a reception. There it

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appeared under the auspices of a man\* who, by his name and by his experience supporting its new dogmas, soon procured it admission. There, too, it obtained the full approbation of young physicians in particular, who imagined they saw the dark recesses of morbid nature at once illuminated with its light; and thought themselves quickly raised, by its easily transitive power, to infallible practical physicians.--- And, as the clinical practice in the hospitals in Pavia destined to the instruction of young physicians, was grounded upon the new system, they adopted in their own beginning practical sphere of action Brown's methods of cure, whose success they themselves had, in part, witnessed. Germany only remained behind. Formerly in the habit of immediately transplanting the productions of foreign industry--of foreign acumen and genius to her own soil, and there to multiply and to meliorate them, she left Brown's works untouched, and they would have perhaps remained long dead to

\* Dr. Frank, now in Vienna.

us, had not the reputation of their life reached us from Italy. Moscati's new Latin edition was insensibly distributed among us; and, unfavourable as the reception which the new system, and, in particular, some of its dogmas met with in reviews, was, it could not but become a more serious matter to us, as a celebrated physician, a thinker for himself, and an acute observer, has erected himself into its defender and expounder.—It is Dr. Weikard, who has favoured us not only with a translation of the *ELEMENTA MEDICINÆ*, but with a sort of commentary on Brown's system. And even without this authority, Brown's system, from the matters of fact which seem to speak for it, merits the universal attention of the German physicians. Both the teacher and the disciples mention it with an enthusiasm, with which formerly the system of a *Boerhaave* and others was scarcely adopted. To hear them speak, one would think that no medicine at all had existed before the great reformer, *Brown*, that he first founded the true science. He is compared with *Newton*, who established

the laws of inanimate matter,—is said to have brought to light in the same manner the great simple laws of life from the thick darkness in which they were shrouded by ignorance and prejudice ; and to have built the science of animated matter upon solid grounds, with a sort of mathematical certainty ; that science, which comprehends every modification of life to be found upon this terrestrial globe—the whole animal and vegetable kingdoms. A higher sense is affixed to this language when this very man and his disciples are heard to appeal to experience, which is said to impress the seal of truth and utility upon the new dogmas. It is no longer mere speculations with which we have to do,—it is rules that are said to guide the practical physician more safely than all the former miserable expedients of fluctuating art,—it is rules that put human life into the physician's power—that raise the servant of nature, with which title those who profess the art of healing have hitherto been modestly satisfied, to the dignity of her master—that promise to cure many dreadful diseases incident



cident to the human species more certainly and more quickly than was done by the former methods of cure—nay, to subject maladies, held incurable, to the omnipotence of the physician !\* Such pretensions cannot fail to make one at least desirous—yes, I may say, must make it a duty to every one, to study this system, in order to bring it to the test, and to adopt the good it may contain, with gratitude. In such a case, a mere extract from a review, which is besides so seldom quite veracious and impartial, suffices no longer, and, on the contrary, it cannot but be acceptable to obtain its dogmas as complete as possible, and with all the author's illustrations.†

\* Taught by his art divine, the sage physician  
Eludes the urn ; and chains or exiles death. T.

† Dr. Pfaff has translated into German the last edition of Brown's work, in a masterly manner, namely, The ELEMENTS of MEDICINE ; or, a Translation of the *Elementa Medicinæ Brunonis*, with large notes, illustrations, and comments. By the author of the original work. A new edition. Philadelphia, ---printed by Dobson, 1790 : And to which German translation the original of this treatise is prefixed. T.

Brown's



Brown's system recommends itself, in particular, by a certain simplicity and clearness—properties which are so much wanting to most of the former systems of medicine, those artificial, complicated works.—This simplicity easily fascinates us—we think, at first sight, that it is the simplicity of nature, which the fortunate seer has hit, and exhibited for the good of our science. A few principles, which might be easily held the simple laws of nature, constitute the essence of the new doctrine; we are constantly referred to them, and the whole work is taken up with nothing but their development and application, and their exhibition in various forms. Who has comprehended them right, has comprehended the whole system. These principles embrace the whole science of medicine, and the physiology, pathology, and the therapeutics together, as if with a common band. The healthy and morbid states are exhibited by this new doctrine as essentially similar—the phænomena of both explained from the same grounds—and the rules of the therapeutics deduced from these grounds

grounds as necessary consequences. The author has every where avoided losing himself too much in the maze of subtile explications and theories. He has not ventured into that territory in which the mere imagination is so often a bad guide, and deceives with reveries ; but cautiously remains at the frontier, where there are still matters of fact to guide the observer of nature. But just this simplicity in explaining the phænomena, which, by their great multifariousness, presented a labyrinth, for so long a time, even to the greatest investigators, who traced nature so assiduously—this clearness in objects, which are wrapt up in so much obscurity to the most perspicacious—this systematical pregnant brevity, to which life with all its relations and phænomena is reduced—this ease, with which the methods of cure of the most complicated diseases are derived from a few positions—this confidence, in fine, with which those are recommended—cannot fail to excite a just diffidence in the whole doctrine, and give reason to suspect great pretensions of both partiality and ignorance.

Life, all its phænomena—health, disease, and death, Brown deduces from one origin, namely, the effect of certain active things on a power of the animated body, which distinguishes this body from inanimate matter. This power he names *EXCITABILITY* (*incitabilitas*). It is, according to him, the very same power through the whole system, equal and not different at different places; and the nerves, in particular, and the muscles, are its seat. This excitability is put in activity by those active things—by the *EXCITING POWERS* (*potes-tates incitantes*);—they occasion it to manifest itself—to produce effects. All these exciting powers act by *STIMULATION*—they are *stimuli* to the excitability: it is affected and *put in activity* by them to whatever place they be applied, through the whole system, in an equal manner; and the result of their effect on the excitability is *EXCITEMENT*, upon which all the functions—all the phænomena of the living body, depend; and which consists in motion, sensation, and manifestation of the mind, or rather discovers itself by them. As excitement de-termines

termines all the phænomena of life, they, of course, depend at last upon stimulation. This is, consequently, the great omnipotent spring of life,—it is, by its various modifications, the abundant source of all the diseases of the animated system. Both health and disease depend upon the degree of excitement only; and, by consequence, in a remote manner upon the degree of stimulation, (by which stimulation I here understand the impression—the influence of the stimuli on the excitability, and which I hereby distinguish sufficiently from the excitement, which is a consequence of this impression—an activity—a manifestation of the excitability—and its influence on all the organs of the body and on the mind) upon the efficacy—the intensity—the quantity of the stimuli. A moderate excitement determines the state of health, and depends upon a moderate effect of the stimuli.—And just these stimuli, which, in the healthy state, act continually on the body, produce the various universal diseases.—Either the measure of the stimulant effect is too small, by the total removing of single stimuli, or by weakening the intensity

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of the one or of the other stimulus ; and a consequence of this weaker stimulation is a less excitement, which constitutes the one chief form of disease that must show itself variously, according to the difference of the degree of weakness of the excitement. All these various diseases have one fundamental cause. Weakness of excitement is their proximate cause—want of stimuli, and, consequently, weakness of stimulation, are their remote—and their variety depends upon the different degree of this weakness.—In all these diseases, the excitability is superabundant, so far as it is an universal property of the stimuli to lessen the excitability ; and, consequently, with the lessening of the stimuli, the excitability must be increased. Yet, in all these diseases, the excitability lies, though superabundant, languid, on account of the want of stimuli.—This determines the state of the DIRECT DEBILITY, and the diseases depending upon it obtain the appellation of the ASTHENIC. The only proper method of cure of these diseases can consist but in raising the excitement again to the degree adequate to health ; and this must be effectuated by supplying the



the wanting stimuli, and strengthening the weaker ; or, as weakened nature cannot yet properly support the stimuli adequate to health, and as they are not always sufficient to lessen the accumulated excitability, and to reduce it to the middle temperature, by using uncommon, more stimulant means. As the want of stimulation, from the lessening or weakening of the natural stimuli, produces this form of diseases, as the weakness of excitement—superabundance of excitability—but which lies languid, constitutes their essence, their whole simple method of cure consists in the increasing of the excitement—in the lessening of the superabundant excitability—by stimulants of every kind, whose number and strength, however, must be adequate to the degree of weakness ; so that all the asthenic diseases of direct debility must be treated in a stimulant manner, but with various modifications of the stimulant plan of cure. Or the measure of the stimulation may exceed that adequate to health, by the natural stimuli's acting on the excitability in a greater degree—with an increased power—and in a greater number ; a consequence of which

is, a stronger excitement; and this determines, then, the other chief form of disease, which, likewise, shows itself variously, according to the difference of the degree of the increased stimulation and excitement, and according to the difference of the organs affected the most; a difference, upon which the various forms of the asthenic diseases, too, depend with it. All these diseases are named *STHENIC* :\* in them the functions of the animated system are uncommonly strengthened, (but, in the asthenic, weakened) and their cure can be effectuated but by reducing the excitement to the middle degree adequate to health, which is done by lessening and moderating the too strongly acting stimuli. This operation may be termed a weakening of the system, and the means of accomplishing it, weakening. Its method of cure, like its nature, is the contrary of the asthenic.—

\* Their old name is *phlogistic*; but, as this insipidly metaphorical denomination is founded in an ancient erroneous representation, as if these diseases proceeded from fire or flames, Brown has properly repudiated it. See the note to § 66 of the Philadelphia edition of his work. T.

The aforementioned weakness of excitement, however, depends not merely upon the weaker effect of the stimuli, and upon the thereby accumulated excitability, but upon their direct contrary—the excitability at last exhausted by too violent stimuli, on which excitability the usual stimuli then have no longer a sufficient effect to produce a proper excitement. This state of the excitability, and of the excitement depending upon it, determines another sort of weakness, the *INDIRECT DEBILITY*, which, likewise, becomes a source of various diseases, but which have this in common with those depending upon the direct debility, that in them too small an excitement has likewise place, which often appear in their external form quite similar to them, which are distinguished by the denomination of asthenic diseases too, and which must, like them, be treated in a stimulant manner. Yet this great difference between the treatment of these two sorts of asthenic diseases must obtain, namely, that we begin in those diseases depending upon indirect debility with very strong stimulants, because otherwise the exhausted excitability would not re-act

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properly, but descend gradually to less stimulating means, till, at last, the natural stimuli is able again to produce a proper excitement adequate to health ; whereas, in the state of direct debility, we begin with smaller stimulants, as the much accumulated excitability supports no greater ones without danger, but would suddenly be quite exhausted by them : then proceed to stronger ; and, at last, endeavour to have recourse to the more natural stimuli likewise.—By the way of debility, death reaches the body in a twofold manner—either by the highest degree of the direct, or by the highest degree of the indirect debility.—A constant lessening of such stimuli, which are the most efficacious in preserving the machine and animating its functions, increase the weakness to so high a degree, and accumulate the excitability so much, that at last the excitement quite ceases, and cannot be re-established at all. This is the one gate of death : The other is opened by the total exhaustion of the excitability, which then allows of no farther excitement. In this manner, death either happens suddenly by the too great violence of the stimuli,



muli, or draws near slowly by intermediate diseases, yet inevitably by the constant effect of more moderate stimuli.

These are the leading features of Brown's system—the principles, upon which every thing depends,—and, if they can be attacked with success, and their falsity shown, the whole structure must fall to the ground; though, after its fall, many useful materials may remain, and be used for the erection of a better edifice.

Brown (as his principle is to adhere to evident matters of fact only, and to the conclusions which are quite immediately inferred from them, and never to involve himself in the obscure investigation of the deeper lying causes----an investigation which, to the great detriment of the science, has, in his opinion, already begot so many reveries and errors) does not engage in the closer inquiry into the nature of the excitability. By the predicates, which he applies to this power, he, however, uses more arbitrable positions than many who have reasoned much more on the nature of the *vis vitæ*. Without attacking him on the point of his having (perhaps without reason)



son) considered powers, which, as to their seat—their relations to other things—their effects—are essentially distinct from one another, as one power,—we shall rather endeavour but to prove that the properties, which he ascribes to this power, are repugnant, partly to his other assertions—partly to several phænomena of the living body.—This power would remain for ever dormant, and manifest itself by no effects, were not means to put it in activity spread every where, both in us and out of us.—These means he comprises under the common denomination of stimuli, because he attributes to them a common manner of acting on the vital power, (the excitability) stimulation of it; an assertion which he grounds upon the similitude of their visible effects. This mode of inference in the general, for as much as he is pleased to use it so often in the founding of his system, may lead to many errors. The sensible effects—the apparent phænomena—may be very similar,—may be the same without the alterations which precede them, and from which they arise; that is, the proximate effect of certain causes agreeing with  
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one another, and these causes of those similar visible effects may be very distinct from one another. The electric and magnetic effluvia or powers communicate to bodies the property of attracting other bodies ; in this case, the visible effect is the same, attraction of little bodies at perceivable distances (for the filings of iron are attracted by electric bodies, as well as by the magnet) but how distinct is the cause ! Were our senses fine enough—had we microscopic eyes—to perceive all the smallest varieties of such effects, we could infer with greater safety from the visible effects to the occult causes ; but how much is wanting to us in this respect ! how often do we perceive but the coarsest marks ! Another example will illustrate this more, and with a more immediate application to Brown's system. In many cases, the greater excitement depends upon the greater effect, or greater number of stimuli. When a new matter acts on the body, and the result of this action is a greater excitement, Brown, conformably to the above-mentioned mode of inference, that similar visible effects presuppose similar causes, would judge that

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this newly-added matter has likewise acted as a stimulus. But let us suppose that this newly-added matter should so act as to increase the principle of excitability itself, (and this manner of acting cannot be denied, at least *à priori*, and is even attributed by several modern authors to a few remedies) would not the same effect then, a greater excitement, be, as the old stimuli would act on an increased power, necessarily produced? And, consequently, is not the above inference premature? that is to say, does not the principle, from which it flows, lead to many errors in its application? But were the rightness of this mode of inference even granted, Brown is wrong in throwing all stimuli into one class, and attributing to them a similar manner of acting. Excitement indeed is, according to him, their common similar effect; but how various is this excitement, as it consists, now in motion—then in sensation—then in manifestations of the mind! The stimuli, which can excite sensations, are not all able to produce motions; nay, if we reflect how various these motions themselves, upon which the manifold functions of the

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ferent organs of the body depend, are, and how little a stimulus, which excites the motion of one organ, is able to excite that of another, this difference of the stimuli shows itself in a still clearer light. The whole great weighty doctrine of the specific IRRITABILITY and specific stimulus, Brown has quite overlooked. Upon it depends the explanation of the most important phænomena of physiology—upon it the explanation of all the secretions—upon it the explanation of most of the forms of diseases—upon it, in fine, the explanation of the effect of various medicines. With the decision of authority, the excitability is the very same equal power diffused thro' the whole system, and every stimulus that acts on it at any one place, affects the excitability of the whole body. Brown thinks he has answered every objection ; but when matters of fact speak, such decisions are impotent. Without wishing to attack here the doctrine of consent, I must be allowed to mention that, true and well-founded tho' it seems to me with proper restriction, it may, in my opinion, become erroneous, by too extensive an application. Only those

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organs,



organs, which, in construction and function, have a great similarity to one another, or are supplied with branches by the same principal nerves, are conjoined with one another by the bonds of consension; and this consension then reveals itself, in part, by similar stimuli's affecting them (those organs) in the same manner. But these bonds of consension are so far from tying together all the organs, all the systems, in Brown's sense, that rather, as we will see afterward, a dissension between many of them obtains, and just the phænomena of the specific irritability, which are, in particular, the matter in present agitation, may be considered as limitations at least, if not directly as contradictions, of the consension. They are too well known to have occasion here to be more explained: for who is ignorant, for example, that the blood and certain movements of the mind are stimuli to the heart and the vessels? but the will, which, on the other hand, is able to put the voluntary muscles in motion, is by no means a stimulus to those; that light is an exclusive stimulus to the iris,—that opium promotes the motions of the vascular system, and, in part,

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its functions too, but not the functions and motions of other organs, for instance, those of the intestinal tube, which it appears rather to weaken and to interrupt,—that cathartics lessen perspiration,—that several poisons taken into the intestinal canal are productive of no bad effect, whereas, when mixed with the blood, they become instantly mortal,—that fixed air, when inhaled, kills, but when taken into the intestinal tube, excites its functions,—that the variolus and the syphylitic virus, though both stimulant, affect quite different systems, and produce phænomena that differ very much from one another, and so on? I shall not so much as speak here of the specific SENSIBILITY, which renders it necessary for every organ of sense to have its specific stimuli, in order to be excited to activity, that is to say, to communicate sensations to the mind. The excitability is, consequently, a power various, at least modified, in different systems, and requires its various peculiar stimuli, to be put in activity, and the first property, which Brown attributes to his excitability, that it is the very same *equal* undivided power through the whole system,

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is an erroneous one. He farther attributes to it the property that it is exhausted by the effect of the stimuli, and accumulates when they are removed or their effects weakened. In order not to maintain a palpable absurdity in these propositions, he must grant that the excitability is renewed every moment, and, as it were, always newly secreted; and yet this seems to be contradicted by the 70 § of the Philadelphia edition of the Elements, in which he seems to maintain that the lot of every creature at the beginning of life is a given sum of excitability, which is gradually exhausted by stimuli, and of which therefore life, that depends upon nothing but the influence of the stimuli on the system, so to say, gnaws something every moment, so that in this respect nobody, let him endeavour ever so much to preserve the proper measure in his excitement, can escape the eternal fate of death, which is, by the constantly operating, though ever so gentle stimuli, which quite exhaust the excitability at last, brought about at length, though slowly, but accelerated by excessive stimulation, on account of the quicker exhaustion of the excitability

bility (29). If, consequently, the consumed excitability is not always renewed, it is not comprehensible how one after violent sthenic diseases, in which the excess of stimulation has obviously exhausted the excitability, can recover his former strength, that consists in a proper excitement, to which, besides the proper measure of the act of stimulation, a middle excitability is required. And yet daily experience shews that this is the case, that many have more strength after a violent sthenic disease, and that therefore, if the excitability, according to Brown's assertion, is really wasted and diminished by stimuli, it must be restored and renewed some way or other, because else it could not produce so strong an excitement after the influence of the old stimuli, which had place before the disease, as formerly. How much less can, without this supposition of a continual renewal of the excitability, a restauration from a disease—from indirect debility to one's former state of good health and strength—be conceived ! And yet, how quick is often the return of good health—of the former strength and vigour—after a fit of indirect debility ; for instance,

instance, after the sound sleep that succeeds inebriation ! Without this assuming of a constant renewal of the excitability, as it were a continual secretion of it, (that is, of its principle) no accumulation, no augmentation of it from lessening the stimuli, or from their weaker effect could be conceived ; for even this weaker effect must needs always take away and consume somewhat of it ; and under these circumstances, an accumulation cannot take place but when it is assumed that more excitability is every moment separated than the weaker effect of the stimuli is able to waste ; whereas, in the healthy state, such a wasting has place by a proper lively effect of the stimuli. Brown, therefore, must either give up his proposition, that the stimuli lessen or consume the excitability, or assume that the excitability is always renewed or re-established, if he would not fall into the greatest contradictions and absurdities.— But, for reasons, whose developement would not be here in its proper place, no such constant renewal and re-establishment, no exhaustion and accumulation of the excitability can be conceived, without granting



ing a matter, a principle of some sort or other, which is the necessary condition of the efficacy of the vital power, and with whose accumulation or diminution the power, as to its manifestation at least, likewise accumulates or diminishes, a principle, to which the power itself perhaps belongs as a property, and which is always lessened by the stimuli, when they produce a manifestation of this power. By that very principle, however, we are led to new relations, which the substances and powers of every sort that surround us and act on our bodies may have to the excitability, to relations, which cannot be reduced to the word *stimulation*. May there not be substances which may, by a sort of chymical affinity, or in general in any other way than a stimulating one, deprive animal bodies of the excitability, and occasion diseases from indirect debility and death ; substances, which occasion such a weakness, which do not stand in relation at least to the degree of stimulation with which they perhaps act at the same time, and which do not operate at the same time by visible evacuation?—These were, then, positively debilitating

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substances, true sedatives, which Brown rejects. And many phænomena seem to render this probable, in particular the great debility, which certain contagions, mephitical air (*gas azoticum v. nitrogenium*) and the marsh-miasms in particular occasion, without any one symptom of a stronger excitement's preceding. These cases he endeavours, as cold obviously does not act (says he) in a way different from the other directly debilitating things, to reduce to the common mode of action by the analogy with the effects of cold. But how imperfect, how totally ungrounded is the analogy of those cases with the case of cold ! According to him, cold is the taking away of a stimulus, and, consequently, it may be easily comprehended after his theory how a great debility, namely, of the direct species, may be occasioned in this way. But in the cases above-mentioned, there is directly superadded to the natural stimuli, which preserve good health, a new stimulus, that of contagion, in which case consequently rather more strength than weakness, a greater excitement should be occasioned. Even the debility from the exhalations of marshes,

so dangerous and deleterious, particularly at certain seasons of the year, cannot be reduced to the case of cold. For, should he derive the thereby occasioned debility from this, that the active stimulus of the pure, or vital air (*gas oxygenium*) is in part removed in this case, it might be objected that the eudiometer, which determines right with regard to gas oxygene at least, shews in this respect no great difference between the air which is above marshes, and the common atmospherical air,\* and that, when the debility proceeds from the mere want of a stimulus, all the symptoms of that debility

\* This expression will not seem tautologically redundant to those for whom this treatise is chiefly intended, and it is not necessary to inform them that chymists make a distinction between the atmosphere itself and the atmospherical air, which latter consists of but two constituent parts, or sorts of gas---vital air, or gas oxygene, that makes up at most about 0,27 parts of the atmospherical air, and mephitical air, or gas azotic, which makes up at least about 0,73 parts of it:---the one, it is well known, maintains burning, is itself decomposed in the act of burning, and subservient to all the purposes and functions of animal life and respiration; the other can maintain neither burning nor animal life by respiration, but, as is mentioned in the text, kills by suffocation, when inhaled. Whereas the atmosphere itself teems with innumerable elastic fluids and vapours. T.

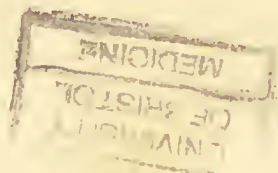
must vanish the moment the patient goes into a pure properly stimulating air, in like manner as all the bad effects of cold quite yield to heat gradually applied : but which in the former case, as dangerous diseases usually remain, does not take place. It therefore seems that certain contagions, for example, the contagion of the plague, which often occasions suddenly an extreme lassitude and loss of all strength without a previous stimulation, without previous sthenic attacks, and several sorts of mephitical air, as, for instance, gas azotic, fixed air, (*gas acidum carbonicum*) which, when inhaled, suddenly kills, destroy the excitability in some way or other yet unknown to us, and perhaps become noxious and mortal in part by interrupting and stopping the afflux of the principle that must be both used and renewed every moment. In this way, then, there is opened a new source of diseases, to which Brown pays no attention at all in his system, and perhaps an important twofold class of remedies, which we look for in his *Materia Medica* in vain ; such remedies as raise the excitability by a more abundant communication of the principle  
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of its efficacy, and such as diminish the accumulated excitability by stopping and weakening this communication, perhaps too by a sort of chymical saturity of its principle.

And thus much as to the nature of his excitability, and as to the relation which he makes it bear towards other things; from which it seems evident, at least to me, that his assertions on this head are still far from that certainty which the *principles* of a *science*, he considers as founded by them, require. We now proceed to the consideration of the most important causes of disease adopted by him, and to the mode of action ascribed to them.

He confines these causes almost entirely to heat, to air, to food, (meat and drink) to the blood, to the juices secreted from the blood, to muscular motion, to sensation, to manifestations of the faculty of thinking, and to movements of the mind, which now stimulate too much, and by that produce too great an excitement, which constitutes the essence of the sthenic diseases, then by the excess of stimulation exhaust the excitability too much, or stimulate too little,  
and



and in both cases produce asthenic diseases, whose nature consists in too weak an excitement. In this manner does Brown deliver over all diseases to us ; in the sthenic we need but moderate and remove the too violent stimuli, which can by no means escape our attention ; in the asthenic, but to restore the wanting stimuli, or furnish others. What confidence must the young physician have in himself and in his art, when he reads the great promises of the reformer, how valiantly will he cope with the enemy formerly the most dreaded, but how much ashamed, how much dejected will he be, when he shall see diseases obstinately resist all his boasted prescriptions, and continue their own course uninterruptedly ! diseases, to whose origin, to whose nature and violence a preceding alteration in the application of the stimuli above-shown correspond in no way, and which do not yield to the best method of cure so soon as they could not but do were their causes but something so superficial, their nature something so changeable and easy to be altered, as Brown would make us believe. This is sufficiently obvious from the  
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examples of every somewhat dangerous disease. If a peripneumony, for instance, is once begun, it goes through its stages notwithstanding the method of cure the most correct and the most adequate to Brown's prescriptions. If it, as to its nature, consisted in an increased excitement from too violently acting stimuli, it would necessarily cease, or at least its violence considerably remit, as soon as these stimuli should be properly moderated, that is, as soon as the too great mass of blood should by phlebotomy and other evacuating means be diminished, the patient carried into an atmosphere of a proper temperature, and restrained to a vegetable, aquæous diet, or to a total abstinence, and the greatest rest of body, as well as tranquillity of mind, observed. But how much are we often disappointed in our expectations of the effect of these means! the violence of the disease often remits not at all, but constantly increases to a certain maximum, and then resolves, as it were, of itself. This holds with respect to other maladies. Conversely, how insignificant are those disorders (for they do not deserve the name of diseases) which

really

really depend upon either the excess or the want of those natural stimuli, and whose nature consists merely in an alteration of excitement. How quickly does that sound sleep after inebriation pass that indirect debility, which we must assume according to Brown's system ! and how is it conceivable that this indirect debility only is in other cases the source of the most dangerous, mortal diseases ? are we not rather compelled to suspect, in such cases, deeper lying complaints of the machine ? Besides, a single venesection removes all the bad symptoms that depend upon plethora, the slight symptoms of indigestion vanish by observing a better regimen, &c. These considerations would be sufficient of themselves to induce us to assume quite other causes of disease, than the few simple ones of Brown's system, though other considerations should not survene to make us incline to this opinion from new grounds. But other considerations of a different nature actually occur. He teaches us that the blood and the secreted juices become causes of disease but by the fault of quantity, by superabundance or want, and the former



over and above by the fault of motion.—  
 But may not the blood and the secreted  
 juices likewise become, by corruption and  
 by degenerations of various sorts, noxious  
 powers, significant and frequent causes of  
 disease? Our fluids are subject to foreign  
 influence, have relations of a particular na-  
 ture to substances, which surround, pene-  
 trate, and pervade us: why should not they  
 be first altered by these 'ere the excitability  
 is affected, and then induce a sympathy of  
 it, and thus produce diseases? I shall not  
 just name these relations chymical; but,  
 on the other hand, we must not assume that  
 certain powers quite cease because others  
 intervene. It is true, the chymical affinity  
 does not act so undisturbedly in the human  
 body as in a cucurbite, because it is under  
 the influence of the vital power; but yet  
 we must not admit that it is quite ineffica-  
 cious. As our fluids consist of nothing but  
 substances, which otherwise shew certain  
 affinities to one another and to other sub-  
 stances, they certainly do not quite cease to  
 do so in animated bodies. Do not the  
 functions of the lungs and of the system of  
 the skin give us the clearest proof of it?—

If, therefore, there are noxious powers which, without acting perceptibly or hurtfully on the excitability, alter our fluids ; if these corrupted fluids then, especially those which are secreted, (and why should there not be vices of the secreted fluids, which principally depend upon the vices of the fluids that are carried to the organs of secretion ?) attack the solid animated parts, or act as preternatural stimuli ; and if this relation towards the irritability is a necessary inevitable one, how can one then believe any longer in the limited series of the causes of disease of the new system ? These degenerations, these corruptions of the blood, of the secreted juices, arise indeed in most cases from a vicious effect of the living solid parts, from spasms, from a perverted efficacy of the vital power, but they then yield new causes of disease, increase and prolong the disease, and give it another form. From these premisses, I think we cannot so absolutely repudiate strumous, rheumatic, and similar acrimonies, (let the word be ever so improper) scorbutic, rachitic, and such peccancies of the humours ;  
but

but they are sometimes primary, sometimes secondary causes of disease.

The contagions, which form the basis of most epidemical diseases, and, though not reigning at the beginning, usually develop themselves in the course of every violent epidemical malady, are another great class of the causes of disease. Brown, indeed, has not over-looked them, but has numbered the maladies, which depend upon them, with the local ones, and endeavoured in this way to save his system. But why they are ejected out of the class of the universal diseases, as they agree in all symptoms with the other diseases acknowledged by him to be universal, as contagion seizes the excitability in particular, and as the causes of the universal diseases adopted by him never act but in a limited manner, we absolutely cannot comprehend. But one always falls into such contradictions and such embarrassment, when he maintains a partial favourite hypothesis in opposition to the loud voice of experience; and how little could the system be saved by the recourse which he has to his last part on the local diseases! By them, the difficulties

are but put off, not solved. For this very last part is a *rudis atque indigesta moles*, which makes up a great and important part of pathology, and, as long as the diseases comprehended under it are separated from those named universal by such a partition wall, as long have we no system, no universal science of diseases, and Brown's reform is nothing but new confusion.

From what has been said; the imperfect and defective etiology of diseases in Brown's system, seems to me sufficiently obvious.—I shall now consider yet a few universal phænomena of diseases, which seem to justify raising an objection against some of the most material theorems. I mean the crises of the inflammatory diseases, or that sudden alteration of them that happen without the assistance of remedies, to a striking state of amendment, accompanied with various abundant excretions from the different emunctories, evacuations by expectoration, urine, stool, and perspiration.—I shall not defend here the opinion of a curative power of nature, as a particular power that is irreducible to the common capacities and powers of the body ; but it  
cannot



cannot be denied that the organic body can by means of its disposition and of the powers inherent in it, protect itself from many dangers. Brown may, indeed, be right when he says (§ 95) that these powers do not act without external things ; but are not many causes of disease finally rendered innocuous, and evacuated just by the motions which at the beginning constitute the disease ? are not many maladies, so to say, a conflict between nature and the noxious powers, in which conflict the former now succumbs, then prevails, according to the nature of the noxious power ? By this, I mean but to shew that those external things, without which the curative powers of nature are nothing, must not just be medicines, whose use Brown encourages with so much assurance without any restriction, and to point out the danger of disturbing nature in her salutary motions by this rash and oppressive use. Such disturbances, however, would not occur to a disciple of Brown, who sees nature every where sinking under the power of stimuli which she cannot remove, or for want of stimuli she cannot re-establish ; but he would not on  
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that account overthrow matters of fact, which the writings of the greatest physicians of both ancient and modern times secure from every objection. These crises, these undeniable motions of nature left to herself for the re-establishment of health, give reason to make a weighty objection to another position of this system. They occur the most frequently in fevers, consequently in diseases, which he deduces from want of stimuli. They consist chiefly of copious evacuations by various organs of secretion, or at least are accompanied with them. But just by these evacuations, as the mass of blood and the quantity of secreted juices, which stimulate so effectually, are diminished, the want of stimuli is increased, with them therefore the cause of the disease increases, and the disease itself should consequently be made worse by these very crises, if Brown's theory were right. But how much does experience contradict all this ! The example of every intermittent fever illustrates it sufficiently.— Its paroxisms, which properly make up the disease, are, according to him, of asthenic origin, proceed from want of sufficiently strong

strong stimulation. The intermission, which exhibits a state nearer good health, can therefore happen but from the stimulation, and, consequently, the excitement's increasing again. But, as the number of stimuli is so considerably diminished by the copious perspiration that usually terminates every paroxysm, should not the debility, the asthenic, become yet greater by every paroxysm. What are, then, the exciting noxious powers which are removed, according to him, by the paroxysm, (66)?—For my part, I can divine none from his system. Again, intermittent fevers often cease after a few paroxysms, without the use of remedies; whereas, according to his mode of representation, they should, as the debility, the asthenic must needs be more and more increased by every paroxysm, increase more and more, and grow worse and worse.

A principal idea of this system, which is quite false and refuted by experience, is, that there is not a different diathesis of the various systems in the different diseases, but that in all systems the activity of the vital power, the excitement is either increased or

diminished. Hence does Brown know but two chief forms of diseases. It is true, he allows that the affection of a single part may be more obvious than that of all the other parts of the body ; and, according to him, the particular form of disease which is determined by such a partial affection, arises from the noxious exciting powers having acted more immediately on this part, or from this part's being endowed with a greater excitability ; but never, maintains he, can the nature of this affection be different from the nature of that of the other parts ; never, for instance, the excitement increased in a single part when it is diminished in general, or *vice versa*. This is directly repugnant to the nature and form, I may say, of every disease. It should seem as if in most maladies the vital activity of one system could not increase but at the expence of the vital activity, that is, of the excitement of other systems, as if most diseases depended upon such a change, and in this respect as if no pure sthenic or asthenic, but only mixed diseases at most, had place. Every paroxysm of a fever gives us the most striking proof of it. In it, we see the vital  
power



power of the vascular system more active, its excitement increased ; this increased excitement shows itself at first by spasms of the smallest and more irritable vessels, and then by oftener and stronger contraction of the heart and arteries, by the heat, redness, and swelling of the skin arising from that, which increased activity of the heart and vessels does not cease till after a general perspiration, that empties the vessels considerably. But how much are the other systems affected at the same time ! how feeble, and, as it were, dead, is their vital power, the excitement in them ! the patients can scarcely hold themselves upright, the voluntary muscles refuse their service entirely, tremble with the least effort, and are quite relaxed ; the organs of sense more obtunded, the functions of the mind more languid and debilitated. It therefore seems as if that principle, which is used in a greater quantity for the strengthened and more frequent motions of the vascular system, were thereby taken away from the other organs, in which the vital power acts, and this, consequently, rendered inactive in them. It seems to be an universal law, that

when we see increased motion at one place, the motion is diminished at another. The excretion by the cuticular pores diminishes that by those of the intestinal tube, not only by taking away the fluids, but by the vessels of the intestines acting more weakly from the increased activity of those of the skin. The same holds of many other secretions and excretions. How often do we find this law, that, when the activity of the vital power appears increased in one system, it is diminished and weakened in other systems, confirmed in chronical diseases ! Hysterical persons and hypocondriacs, with whom the activity of the vital power in the nervous system is so much increased ; with whom the imagination, feeling, and the passions, are so active ; with whom the understanding, acumen, and wit, often appear in the most flourishing strength, suffer from a weakened activity of the vital power, from a weakened excitement in other systems, especially in the organs of digestion, and in the secretory organs of the gastric or digestive juices in a painful manner, and the system of their voluntary muscles is often languid and enervated. Brown him-

self could not avoid seeing these striking phænomena of lessened excitement in single organs with increased excitement in others, and deigned the more to bestow his attention on them, that they yield an objection to his system. He did not over-look that, in the sthenic diseases, in which the excitement of all the organs is increased; for example, in the peripneumony, in the inflammatory fever and rheumatism, the faculty of voluntary motion can be so much weakened, that the patient can use his hands and feet no better than a cripple, and conversely, in the asthenic diseases, whose criterion is debility, diminution of the excitement of the whole system, increased motions occur in single parts, cramps and convulsions in both the voluntary and involuntary muscles, of which diarrhoea, cholera morbus, every violent fit of vomiting and purging, tetanus and epilepsy, give the most undeniable proofs. But that in the former case true debility, or lessened excitement, is not the cause of the diminution of certain functions; and in the latter, the increased motions do not depend upon the increased excitement or

activity of the vital power, he endeavours to prove by this, that the weakened functions in the sthenic diseases, instead of being raised by stimulants from this state of debility to greater strength, sink but the more after their use, and that they, on the contrary, by the application of the weakening method of cure, recover their former strength ; and just so do the seemingly invigorated motions in the asthenic diseases increase by the weakening method of cure, and remit by the stimulating one, and return to their usual strength. From this, he infers that the functions are but seemingly, and not really, diminished in the one case and increased in the other. But if we would not absolutely confound conceptions, and grant subtile and unintelligible distinctions, we must directly reject the distinction he makes between real and seeming strengthening and weakening. For if the strength of a corporal function, which arises from motion, depends quite alone upon the strength and ease with which this motion is performed : if this is also the only scale for the strength of the excitement, there is no doubt at all but when I  
find



find the ease and strength of certain motions very much weaker than in the natural state, I must name the function, excitement weakened; and there can be no farther question, as Brown is of opinion (229), whether increased or diminished contraction has place in the tetanus, the epilepsy and the repeated vomiting of the cholera morbus. A better founded and more significant distinction, which is usually made in pathology between the weakened functions, consists in this, whether the debility depends merely upon the oppression of the vital power by a stimulus of disease, or upon a real wasting of the vital power; and in this respect, a distinction may by all means be made between seeming and true debility; but this distinction he has not at all in view here, because he considers both the direct and indirect debility, which may correspond to that true and seeming debility, as belonging to the asthenic, and distinguishes from it nothing but the debility in the sthenic diseases as a seeming one. Whether, that notwithstanding, the stimulation be absolutely diminished in all asthenic diseases, and in those in which

which a strengthening of many functions or of many motions appears, and whether it be absolutely increased in the sthenic ones, though a few functions are weakened, is another question. In this Brown, as, according to his principles, the strength of the excitement conforms, not merely to the degree of the stimulus, but to the strength of the excitability; and, for instance, with a very accumulated excitability small stimuli may produce very violent motions; and, conversely with a worn-out excitability, the motions do not shew the usual strength, even after stronger stimuli—might be thought to be right. But even then the proposition, so expressed, that in the one case the stimulation is diminished, in the other increased, were always wrong. For the stimulation is an influence on the excitability, as it were an alteration of it; which influence is a production of the strength of the stimulus and of its own intensity, and to the degree of stimulation the degree of excitement must perfectly correspond, unless mechanical impediments yield an altered result; consequently, when there is increased excitement, increased stimulation

mulation must have preceded, and conversely, lessened excitement depends upon lessened stimulation, though, perhaps, a weaker stimulus has acted in the former case, than in the latter. This reasoning holds, even when we assume with him that the stimulants, which give relief in those asthenic diseases, in which some motions appear strengthened, have stimulated the whole system, and, of course, the parts affected; and that the weakening means, or those which lessen stimuli, and are salutary in the sthenic diseases, in which a few functions appear diminished, have weakened the whole system. For in the one case, those means which stimulate the whole system, may take away the superfluous excitability of those parts whose motions are more animated than in the healthy state; and, consequently, moderate these motions themselves. And do not we remark, just at the beginning of the treatment of many epilepsies, and of many convulsive hysterics with stimulants, an increase of all the symptoms, of the spasms, because the stronger stimulus acts on an accumulated excitability of the affected symptoms, till  
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at last this is thereby lessened, and then the spasms and convulsions quite cease? Do not we remark besides, that the paroxysm of every epilepsy is as it were a crisis to it, a crisis, which discharges by motions the matter of the disease, the superfluous excitability. Just so in the sthenic diseases can, by the universal weakening by means of evacuants, that stimulus, which by its violent stimulation consumes the excitability of that system, whose functions are thereby weakened, be removed, and, after its removal, the excitability recover itself, and be more active in these organs. Thus may the utility of venesection and of diaphoretics, which weaken the whole system, be explained in the acute rheumatism. But is it conformable to experience in general that the stimulants, commonly so named, stimulate the whole system, and, consequently, increase the excitement in all the parts, in all the organs? What I have said above of specific irritability, and of the different state of the systems in respect to the activity of the vital power in the various diseases, seems to confute this, and to prove that a great many stimuli affect certain organs



gans only and systems, without acting on the others, and that most stimuli, by increasing the activity of the vital power in single organs, weaken its manifestations in other organs. Upon this depends the application of the COUNTERSTIMULI, usually so named, which Brown, true to his system, must necessarily reject ; and it is more than probable that several stimulants, which, conformably to his system, should stimulate universally, act in many cases merely by a more limited stimulus, which acts on a healthy part, and thereby frees the affected part (by revulsion). Epispastics and synapisms are salutary in inflammatory diseases of the breast as counterstimuli only ; Peruvian bark cures the ague chiefly by stimulation, by corroborating the weakened organs of digestion, and by that means as a counterstimulus at the same time, so far as the excitability of the vascular system is thereby weakened ; opium eases pain perhaps in most cases merely as a counterstimulus ; warm baths give relief in colics as counterstimuli ; and how often may weakening means, especially phlebotomy, act by re-

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moving the stimulus of the blood, which increased the excitement at a single place, after which the vital power can act more equally in the whole system, and the languid function of many an organ raise itself to its former strength. I have anticipated this observation, which relates to Brown's therapeutics, because it contributes in a particular manner to maintain my assertion, that in most of the diseases denominated asthenic there is, strictly speaking, no debility of the whole system; that, on the contrary, many functions are invigorated, the excitement of many a system, of many an organ is increased; and, conversely, that in the sthenic diseases the excitement, so far from being every-where increased, lies languid in many places, and because it assists just by that to refute a main position of the new system.

The objections to the chief propositions of the doctrine of the diseases and of their causes, that form the basis of Brown's system, which naturally result from a review of the foregoing observations on these propositions, are as follow :--

1. The

1. The excitability is a power not everywhere equal, but differently modified in different organs and systems.

2. The stimuli, which act on the excitability, do not affect it entirely in the same way, and their effect is various.

3. The relation of stimulation is not the only one in which the external things stand to the excitability.

4. The common natural stimuli, upon whose influence or operation life and good health depend, make up but a small insignificant part of the stimuli which act as causes of disease.

5. The remote causes of disease act proximately or immediately, not only on the solid animated parts, but on the fluids.

6. Increased or diminished excitement by no means constitutes the essence of diseases, which is rather determined by the united state of the solids and fluids in regard to motion, structure, and mixture.

7. In diseases the excitement is seldom merely strengthened or merely weakened in the whole system, and the division into two principal forms of diseases is by consequence a wrong one.

I shall conclude with making a few observations on his therapeutics, which are closely connected with his pathology ; and here, too, I shall have occasion to point out that which is partial, exaggerated, and arbitrable in many of his prescriptions, and their reasons ; though here, as well as everywhere, genius appears in a manner not to be mistaken. It must be allowed, that his therapeutics are very simple, insist but on the use of approved, efficacious remedies, and have discarded a world of ineffectual medicines and useless prescriptions. Several parts of his method of cure appear to me very good, and in many places he points out a better treatment of diseases than the *routine* usually carries with it.—He thunders, methinks, with reason, against the too great use of evacuations in particular, and especially of venesection, in many diseases which proceed from increased irritability and want of fluids, and recommends in its stead the use of stimulants and tonics. But his objections to the former methods of cure are unquestionably exaggerated, and he unjustly ascribes to himself the merit of a reformer in this part of the therapeutics ;



tics; for just in the most important diseases, in which he uses his stimulating method of cure, the same, or at least similar remedies have been long prescribed by the best physicians. This is the case with regard to the treatment of the nervous fever in particular, of the pituitous and putrid fever, of the intermitting fever, of convulsive diseases, of most of the complaints of the intestinal tube, such as the colic, diarrhoea, dysentery, &c. with corroborants, antispasmodics, and stimulants. The question here is, not whether a right conception of the way of acting of these antispasmodics has been formed, but that they have been long used, and good physicians prescribe them daily. And to this the diseases of children, for example, the chincough, atrophy, worms, and so on, whose treatment he sets forth as quite new, make no exception. The confluent small-pox too, were treated by the German physicians, before they knew of his discoveries, with remedies that stimulate and rouse the vital powers; and Sydenham had used opium in them long before Brown's time. Even in a mode of treating diseases, which is the

most capable of any to surprise by its seeming novelty, he had predecessors, or at least it was adopted without a previous knowledge of his system. I here allude to his method of cure of hemorrhages in particular, and of certain inflammations which he denominates asthenic. It is true, that the moment the word inflammation is pronounced, the moment its symptoms, for instance, a fixed pain, a quick tense pulse, &c. appear. The only relief is usually sought in the lancet, and thereby unspeakable mischief occasioned. But it is likewise true, that the physicians, before his day, and, consequently, without him, had distinguished the what is commonly named malignant inflammation, which coincides with his asthenic, and treated it with volatile penetrating stimulants, and with the bark in particular. The case is the same with regard to the putrid angina, the putrid inflammations in the confluent smallpox, the putrid scarlet exanthemata, and other malignant fevers. And is not this method of cure extended to the inflammations of the abdomen, particularly in the puerperal fever, in which calomel, that

Brown

Brown himself must allow to be a very great stimulant, conjoined with opium, is given? He treats all hemorrhages also, whether from the matrix, from the fundament, or from the breast, &c. in the same manner as the asthenic inflammations, with stimulants. And this method of cure, as in the uterine hemorrhages cinnamon water and ipecacuanha in small doses, which must likewise be considered as a stimulant, have been long recommended, and used with no small advantage; in the violent hemorrhoides, the bark of oranges, nay, even aloes, both which likewise belong to this class of remedies, and, finally, in a hemoptosis, spirit of wine is not new neither. But good physicians have recourse to more efficacious remedies, which Brown repudiates from a mere theory, namely, mineral acids and *cold*, and distinguish finer and better between the hemorrhages, in which the relaxation and weakness of the arteries and veins are chiefly the cause, and in which stimulants may by all means be serviceable; and those, in which the activity of the small arteries is too great, and impels the blood quicker than the veins can receive it, and  
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which must be treated quite like acute diseases by venesection, a low watery diet, &c. and are thus treated with evident success. Brown contradicts his own assertion, that all hemorrhages are of an asthenic nature, proceed from want of stimulation and excitement of the vessels from which the blood issues ; at another place, (§ 533, 534) where he derives the more abundant menses from stimuli, which act chiefly on the uterine vessels, and, consequently, produce there a greater excitement, a sort of sthenic inflammatory diathesis.

Many parts of his therapeutics merit, according to my conviction, full approbation ; and in many diseases his prescriptions agree with those of the most eminent and most successful physicians ; yet his method of cure seems to me to labour under several defects, and to have several chains. He has carried simplicity in his therapeutics a great deal too far, and adapted them too little to the real multifariousness of diseases : in many cases, his two indications of cure do not at all suffice ; so that at the sick-bed one is quite embarrassed with them, as well as with his few remedies ; or, if one is not  
suscep-



susceptible of such an embarrassment, he is led by them to the grossest empiricism.— His mode of representation of the way remedies act, is far too limited ; yes, in some parts, even quite erroneous ; and some of his prescriptions are really dangerous, and proved to be hurtful by an impartial experience. These heavy charges I shall endeavour to make good by single observations and instances.

Besides the articles of diet, and of regimen in general, he reduces all the remedies which must cure the multitude of the various asthenic diseases, to this small number : æther, volatile alkali, musk, camphire, and opium. In almost every violent asthenic disease, he prescribes opium liberally, as the most penetrating stimulus of them all. He seems to me to have great merit in having laid down better principles with regard to this active remedy and its use, and in having recommended it, conformably to them, with confidence in many diseases in which it was held, if not hurtful, at least suspicious. Ridiculous though his exclamation, *Opium mehercle non sedat*, has been found, it seems to me to contain much

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truth.

truth. In most cases, it is sedative but mediately, and by its stimulating power. According to all impartial experience, it is a very active, penetrating stimulus, but whose effect, excitement, is transitory, and which, in cases in which it meets with a very accumulated or a very exhausted excitability, induces great weakness and relaxation after its effect. Its utility in nervous fevers, in malignant bilious fevers and the like, is certain, and I myself have had occasion to witness happy effects from its use in these diseases. I have seen that it lessens the great quickness of the pulse, and gives it more strength and fulness; that it moistens the dry parched skin and tongue; that it even removes stupor and constant slumbering; in a word, that it rouses the vital powers in every respect, and that by its use, in conjunction with other active stimuli, the patients recover their health. Its great efficacy in agues is sufficiently known, and, in general, it is striking that it likewise renders the greatest services in so many cases in which the bark and other tonics, or powerful stimulants, are beneficial. In the tetanus, in the confluent small-pox,

pox, in the *gangræna senilis*, in hysteria, and the hypochondriasis, in many gouty cases, and in the pulmonary consumption, opium and the Peruvian bark assist one another mutually. These experiences could not be well over-looked : but as the opinion that opium is sedative, and weakens the vital power in a positive way, was once adopted ; and as it was found that bitters, long continued, weaken at last certain organs, for example, the stomach and the intestinal canal, physicians rather chose to retain the narcotic principle, and to attribute it in a smaller degree to the amara. But the reason of this phænomenon seems to me to be rather this, that bitters, on account of their less stimulating power, do not produce till after a longer time, and after a constant use, the same effect, namely, an obtunding of the excitability, as it (the excitability) supports but a certain determinate degree of stimuli, which must bear a relation to the greatness of the restauration, and, consequently, must at last be sensibly worn out when but a somewhat higher degree, than this mean one, acts for a longer time on it ; which obtunding is brought on but very

quick and perceptibly by the opium's stimulating in a stronger and more penetrating manner. I, in general, approve much of Brown's doctrine with regard to the mode of operation of opium and to its use, as well as to that of the other stimulants ; yet I cannot but think that he has shut up his stimulating method of cure within a circle of remedies far too narrow, and recommended these remedies in diseases for which an impartial and faithful experience has taught us to know far more efficacious remedies ; remedies, which seem to be more specific stimuli to the one or to the other system that is chiefly affected, and in whose faults, as, for instance, relaxation, cramps, the principal cause of the disease lies. For example, one is astonished to hear of nothing recommended in the dropsy but opium and rum. How pernicious may the use of rum be in this case ! rum, which has itself so often occasioned the dropsy ; and how often does opium quit us, with all its stimulating power ! In this case, the assistance of specific stimulants must be had recourse to ; stimulants, which act on the lymphatic vascular system especially, and



and increase the absorption by means of it ; and, fortunately, experience has made us acquainted with some more efficacious remedies of this sort, as foxgloves (*digitalis*), squills, and the like. This holds of several other maladies, in a similar manner. What more efficacious stimulus is known in paralytic complaints, than electricity ? and of it, which certainly acts a principal part as a natural stimulant, as atmospherical electricity, Brown says not a word. Epispastics, greatly stimulant as they are, are quite rejected, as a miserable recourse of the common praxis, and as a hurtful, weakening remedy. How many excellent medicines for spasmodic complaints has experience taught us ! medicines that often give relief when opium is quite inactive. Such as the mineral antispasmodics, the cuprum ammoniacum, the saccharum saturni, the flowers of zinc, several vegetable ones too, valerian in particular, and a few ethereal oils. With regard to all these, Brown's materia medica is silent ; and yet with it all diseases are said to be cured more certainly and more speedily than was formerly done ! It is no less astonishing, that even for worms

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he recommends nothing, the articles of diet excepted, but his universal remedy, opium, and quite omits those medicines which are much better anthelmintics. In general, he adheres a great deal too much to his diffusible penetrating stimulants, which are not so easily born by many very delicate constitutions as he imagines; which the physician has less in his power than any other remedies; which, if one is not cautious with the dose, so easily induce relaxation and debility; and which, in chronical diseases in general, cannot at all be used for any length of time, but must be reserved for single violent symptoms in the course of them. Whereas he neglects, quite contrary to the spirit of the good therapeutics, the gentle tonics of the vegetable kingdom, which act so beneficially in various asthenic diseases; especially in the affections of the intestinal tube, and which may be used by turns in chronical diseases in a way so suitable to their continuance. To the necessity of such a use he, as he recommends none but his few stimulants, whose turns soon come, has in general paid too little attention; and yet it is well known how soon  
nature

nature is accustomed to a certain remedy, and then how every new, though not just absolutely a more efficacious remedy, is able to produce a fresh excitement, to act as a tonic or a stimulant. As Brown knows of no particular curative indication for contagions, than what is adapted to the disease in general, which is either sthenic or asthenic, as he either quite rejects the alterations of the fluids, as, for example, the scorbutical ones, other degenerations of the secreted juices, stoppages and obstructions, as causes of disease, or at least bestows no particular attention at all on them, we comprehend perfectly why he blames the use of vegetable acids and fresh vegetables themselves in the scurvy, which he ranks in the class of asthenic diseases; why he never speaks of deobstruents, that is, such remedies as are attenuant and resolvent in certain undeniable stoppages and obstructions in the glands and other organs; as, for instance, mercury, the preparations of antimony, and the juices of many plants; why in arthritical and nephritic complaints, in many diseases of children, as the rickets, &c. why he mentions nothing of antacids,

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lime-water, alkalines, &c. But it is easily seen that these great wants are to be attributed partly to the ignorance of the man who, hurried away by the consciousness of his own genius, held instruction from others superfluous and unnecessary, partly to a certain predilection to his own system. And he who first advised pickled cabbage (*Sauerkraut*) and wort, or an infusion of malt, in the sea scurvy, will be named and blessed, when perhaps Brown's memory shall have been long consigned to oblivion; physicians will continue to prescribe mercury and antimony, when he would obtrude his opium and his brandy; and will succeed by a method of cure, which, supported by the long experience of a series of years, proved by the testimony of great perspicacious physicians, will resist the breath of the reformer without difficulty. His prescriptions for the sthenic diseases seem to me to merit a much more unconditional approbation than those for the asthenic ones, which we have already discussed. In these, he agrees almost entirely with the method of cure adopted by the best physicians, and has chiefly taken his great predecessor,



cessor, Sydenham, for a pattern. And here simplicity, as the diseases themselves show but little variety and difference, is observed with more propriety. Yet even here, Brown betrays originality in a few things, and his principles on the use and way of acting of a few capital remedies in particular, seem to me worthy of being brought to the test. He confines the use of evacuants to inflammatory diseases entirely, and holds them pernicious in all other diseases. Though an imprudent use of these evacuants, especially of the very stimulant ones and of emetics, may be highly pernicious in several sthenic diseases; as, for instance, in the peripneumony, in an inflammation of the stomach or of the intestines, a cautious use of the more cooling saline cathartics, which remove stimuli by a copious evacuation, and free the system, particularly the vessels in whose plethora and preternatural stimulation the nature of the inflammation consists, from this superabundance, seems to me, on the other hand, to merit full approbation; and the successful experiences which have been made with them in the erysipelas, inflam-

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mations of the throat, and even peripneumonies, have long justified this use. He, however, seems to me to assign to evacuants a sphere of action much too small. Though we should grant that all the diseases, which Stoll holds complicated, that is, biliously inflammatory, are pure asthenic ones, in which emetics and cathartics are of service, not by evacuating a corrupted matter, accumulated bile, &c. which act as causes of disease, but by the evacuation of the fluids in general, and by weakening the vascular system, there still remain many diseases, which have more the form of asthenic ones, in which the evacuation of a matter that discovers by its corruption its previous bad effect on the system, constitutes almost the whole cure. Brown absolutely repudiates gastric impurities as the cause of universal diseases; but experience, and the judgment of eminent physicians, who had not only an opportunity to observe many diseases, but a spirit to observe them right, speak against him. With regard to this point, we need but consult Stoll's *Ratio Medendi*, wherein we find a great many cases in which all the symptoms of

of a disease that has all the characteristics of an universal one, are removed by a single emetic, which evacuates much green acid bile. In such cases, have we not every reason to consider so corrupted a bile as a cause of disease, even according to Brown's logic, who from the way of operation of the remedies infers to the cause of the disease in which they appear salutary? And that these diseases, in which those evacuants, particularly emetics, appear so salutary, belong not to the class of sthenic diseases, the great mischief of a single bleeding evinces. How often have we seen the fevers named pituitous and nervous, in which an emetic had been neglected to be given at the beginning, terminate in death, whilst all those patients, who were ill of the same disease at the same time, and to whom this medicine was prescribed, recovered. I am far from numbering these diseases with those strictly gastric, and to derive the efficacy of the emetic from the evacuation which it occasions: I rather think that emetics act by their power of stimulating and of shaking the whole machine; and therefore their use should not be limit-



ed merely to the sthenic diseases, but is extended with advantage to the asthenic ones. How often do gastric impurities, though they should not be considered as a cause of disease, merit our attention as a symptom at least, as a symptom which, so far as it manifests a reaction, always increases the symptoms of the disease, often impedes the proper method of cure, and, consequently, must be removed. This symptom is the attendant, I may say, of all fevers; hence is the gently evacuating method proper at the beginning of all fevers, in order then to be able to proceed with more effect to the proper remedies for the disease. Brown's having opposed the stream of the evacuating method, that treats all diseases as gastric, and thereby often renders them gastric, will always remain a merit; but he, together with several other English physicians, has gone too far, and several of our great German physicians have no doubt a preference in having drawn the line between utility and hurt more accurately, and in administering evacuation, in measure, in most fevers, in order to pave the way; and stimulation



mulation and strengthening, in order to attain the aim.

Of any of the dogmas of Brown's system, that of colds being a weakening, and, consequently, an excellent remedy for sthenic diseases, is the most repugnant to the common mode of representation. By this assertion, he seems to me to display, beyond a doubt, the *coup d'œil* of a master, and to set forth a useful truth, though in this case too he has been carried too far by the force of his imagination, and shewn that he had not coolness enough for the proper limitation of the position. Cold, the enemy of animals, plants and the elements, as he energetically expresses himself, certainly weakens, by its continual effect, the whole system, diminishes the most important functions, and puts a total stop to them at last, as the torpid state or sleep of many animals in winter, the phænomena of freezing to death, the shivering and finding one's self ill after a cold bath too long continued, &c. sufficiently prove. This effect cold produces by lessening a stimulus, which is one of the most efficacious stimuli of life, and upon which the health and prosperity  
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of all organizations depend, I mean the stimulus of heat. In many cases then, in which stimuli in general are wanting; in which an increased irritability has place, and begets many diseases; in which an unequal division of the vital power generates debility of single organs and systems, heat proves beneficially tonic, and in this sense an acute physician\* has lately taken the warm bath, vulgarly decried as weakening, under his protection, raised his voice loudly against the clamour of the common praxis, and ventured to pronounce that the warm bath is in some cases strengthening, and in this respect often more adequate to the purpose than even the steel bath or steel water.† The same happened to it as to opium.

\* The translator presumes Marcard is here meant. He has written an excellent treatise on the Pyrmont waters; in which the diseases of the abdomen are handled in a masterly manner.

† The translator takes this opportunity of recommending the waters of Carlsbad, in Bohemia, as one of the best deobstruents in Europe. They are warm to 58° of Reaumur. They contain mineral alkali, Glauber and culinary salts, somewhat calcareous earth, and fixed air; are very efficacious in gouty cases, the stone and gravel, and a sovereign remedy in complaints of the stomach and bowels. During the space of six consecutive years,

opium. Because it moderates increased motions, and removes spasms of the vessels, it was held a positively weakening remedy. But physicians did not consider that it could produce this effect partly by a counterstimulus, partly by a copious perspiration, and were blind to the innumerable phænomena, which exhibit heat as a beneficial stimulus that rouses the languid vital power. The pernicious effects of an excessive heat were confounded with the salutary ones of a moderate degree of it; and the effect of the former, weakening, was extended without limitation to heat in

years, the translator drank several thousand goblets of this water, and was thereby radically cured of inveterate obstructions and hemorrhoids. This Dr. Dramm, of Carlsbad, who is not only a skilful and learned, but a successful physician, will attest. These waters purge without weakening, and must be continued for a considerable time in obstinate cases. They are hurtful, or even dangerous, in complaints of the breast. Dr. Becher has written a treatise on them, which gives a valuable description of the diseases of the *primæ viæ*, and of the abdomen in general. Besides, Egra (where there is a most excellent steel-water, which contains much more purgative salt than the Pyrmont water, and which is a safe and powerful corroborant after the use of the Carlsbad waters) and Teplitz (where there is a celebrated tepid bath) are in the neighbourhood. T.

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general. But all stimulants and tonics are in like manner weakening at last, either by an excessive stimulus, or by the excessive evacuations which they occasion. Finally, a great confusion could not fail to proceed from the conceptions of strength and weakness not being well determined, and from their being difficult to be determined in the general. In this, indeed, Brown is not at all wavering ; but he conforms too little to the received modes of expression, and affixes an arbitrable sense to his words. For the peripneumony, for instance, exhibits in a certain respect weakness just as much as the gout, and so on. We therefore cannot determine at all, in the general, of a remedy, whether it is strengthening or weakening, because the same remedy may act as weakening in this disease, in that as strengthening, provided all that, which contributes to the cure of a disease, and to the re-establishment of the proper strength of all the functions, be denominated strengthening, as Stoll in one place names emetics antiphlogistic, yet in quite another sense than Brown, because they evacuate the matter of the disease, and, consequently,



moderate the violence of the fever and of the heat. But it will always remain a great merit in Brown to have made physicians more attentive to the stimulating effect of heat, and determined righter, and extended the use of heat in diseases accordingly. Whereas, in his assertions with regard to the way of cold's acting, he seems to me to be more partial, and to limit the application of cold far too much, with a view to favour his theory. He pays far too little regard to the effect of a strong, but only transitorily acting cold, or rather seems to me to explain this effect from false grounds. Nothing but a short cold is ever applied as a corroborant. From these circumstances, does not cold act as a powerful stimulus, especially when it draws the heat suddenly, and in a great quantity, out of the living fibres? Does not the heat, in this efflux, stimulate just as much as electricity, when it is drawn out of a nerve or a muscle?—These elastic fluids always stimulate by their quick motion, in particular; the electricity at rest in the electrified organic bodies, increases many motions, especially of the vessels, not nearly to the degree of that

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flowing out in sparks. Not only the escaping heat, however, but the heat streaming from the internal parts, which endeavours to supply the want, stimulates in this way. In a certain respect, then, the stimulating effect of a sudden cold still depends upon heat, but it always remains true for the practice that sudden cold, and as long as it acts as cold, stimulates and strengthens; and the explanations, which Brown attempts, are thereby removed, at least. But in many cases does not cold stimulate still more, and strengthen, by the disagreeable sensation which it occasions, and to which a re-action from the sensory corresponds? Does the mechanical effect of cold on our bodies quite cease because they are organic? This question can by no means be answered affirmatively. Our bodies, as animated, obey by all means their own laws; these are the sovereign, those are under the influence of the vital power, which has its peculiar relations; but our bodies are not on that account exempt from the dominion of other laws, of other powers, to which they are subject as mere bodies, as matter, and in them the cold contracts,

tracts, as in every other case, both the solids and the fluids, and may, by virtue of its mechanical effect, be used in diseases as a remedy, though Brown has but little regard to this effect.

I shall rest satisfied with these few strictures, as this is not the proper place to enter into a greater detail of the principles of this system, and to prosecute and prove them more in their application to single diseases.\* In this application, however, the difficulties increase much more, and the faults and defects are more and more exposed to view. Yet I by no means mistake Brown's great merit, and far be it from me to wish to lessen it. It is true, he has considered his multilateral object on one side only, but this side is a great and momentous one, and he has illuminated it with a new light, which diffuses clearness over important obscure parts of the science of medicine. His view is very comprehensive

\* As this treatise is, as aforesaid, prefixed to Dr. Pfaff's German translation of Brown's work, the doctor could not have treated this subject more in detail without adding too much to the size of his book. T.

and original, his *coup d'œil* clear and often profound, his inferences are both weighty and subservient to the exercise of the profession. What he honours with the name of a system is nothing more than a fragment, but a valuable one, which, little as it corresponds to the requisites of an universal system of diseases, is quite finished as to itself. Former systems, too, are unfortunately fragments only; and we may venture to foretel, without pretending to possess the art of divination, that many future ones will be so likewise. But why must we reject the endeavours of men of abilities, because they do not perform all that which they perhaps promise? At present, physicians are occupied more about the application of the new discoveries in chymistry to medicine, than about any thing else: the undertaking certainly merits full approbation, and will meet and be crowned with considerable success; but they will exaggerate it too, they will be dazzled by the lustre of the new light, and will form a partial chymical system, that will no doubt serve for the explanation of many phænomena,



mena, but will give universal satisfaction just as little as the system of stimuli, which has now the most adherents, does.\* We, however, are sowing excellent seed, that will yield our offspring a rich harvest. We are collecting materials, which they will easily conjoin and unite in a harmonious whole. This prospect must console us at the sight of the ruins of the systems that have supplanted and overthrown one another in their turns. These ruins will become the materials for erecting an edifice, according to a better plan; for nothing that true observation or careful experience has collected, or acumen illustrated, can be

\* It may not be improper here, or uninteresting to our chymists, to mention, that there is a class of chymists in Germany who adopt the antiphlogistic system entirely, but still maintain the necessity of retaining *phlogiston*, to fill up the chasms the antiphlogistical doctrine leaves in the explication of many phenomena, especially with regard to *light*, both in combustion and without it; which phlogiston, however, they assume, not as the *source of fire* in burning, according to Stahl, who was totally ignorant of the influence of air in burning, but as the *basis of light*. Gren, Leonhardi, and Richter, are among the most eminent of this class, and may be distinguished by the name of *eclectics* in chymistry. The last of them has written an admirable criticism on the new system. T.

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lost. How could medicine yet attain a state of perfection, as many of the sciences, with which it is so intimately connected, and of which it is as it were but a member, only begin to emerge from the obscurity in which they have been hitherto buried. But the clearer morning light that now appears in these, bespeaks a finer day to medicine. We must, however, be cautious not immediately to take every false light to be the new dawn. We must not think that we will be able all at once to read fluently a language, whose letters we have scarcely begun to know. He, however, who has taught us a new letter, always deserves our thanks, and in this view Brown seems to me to do so. For instance, much truth and utility seem to me to be contained in what he says of direct and indirect debility. Indeed, we had had something similar before; I mean debility with increased irritability, and debility with obtusion or inertness; but these conceptions seem to be set in a yet stronger light by his system. The same seems to hold of inflammation, and  
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of its division ; and, in particular, of the way in which many remedies operate. Under the wings of single new ideas, that are so luminous and brilliant, however, the many arbitrable and erroneous positions of this system get admission the easier ; and as the system itself allures so much by its simplicity, as it is every where so practical, and constantly refers to the practice ; as it may thereby easily find adherents, and lead them to the grossest empiricism, as well as to a dangerous self-sufficiency, it were worth one of our great German physicians' while to take the trouble to inspect and prove it more narrowly, to separate the true and good from the false with a sure and impartial judgment ; and thus to render it universally useful. For invectives, which are made without reason against opinions, cannot but hurt the good cause, and answer no other end than to give these opinions, let them be ever so insignificant in themselves, a sort of importance, that becomes a snare to many. Till we are favoured with such a  
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proof, I have thought proper to submit my opinion, supported by grounds, to competent judges, in order to obtain instruction from them.

THE END.

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J. CUNDEE, PRINTER,  
*Ivy-Lane.*

